

# Species Fact Sheets

**Order:** Bucerotiformes  
**Scientific Name:** *Phoeniculus purpureus*

**Family:** Phoeniculidae  
**Common Name:** Green Woodhoopoe

**AZA Management:**  Green  Yellow  Red  None

**Photo (Male):**



**Photo (Female):**



## NATURAL HISTORY:

**Geographic Range:** Europe  Asia  North America  Neotropical   
 Africa  Australia  Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Habitat:** Forest  Desert  Grassland  Coastal   
 Riverine  Montane  Other   
 Green woodhoopoes dwell in savannah, open woodland, palm groves, acacia thornvelds and wooded garden areas. They are absent from arid zones and forest.

**Circadian Cycle:** Diurnal  Crepuscular  Nocturnal  Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Cold Tolerance:** To 70° F  To 60° F  To 50° F  To 40° F   
 To 30° F  To 20° F  Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Heat Tolerance:** To 30° F  To 50° F  To 70° F  To 90° F   
 To 110° F  Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Diet:** Frugivore  Carnivore  Piscivore  Insectivore   
 Nectivore  Omnivore  Folivore  Other (Add Below)

### Captive Dietary Needs:

Their natural diet consists of arthropods, insects, and occasionally lizards and vertebrates probed out of crevices and fissures in bark, wood and grasses. They have also been shown to drink nectar of Erythrina flowers and eat small fruits. Diet for the young can include: caterpillars, grubs, insect egg

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masses, beetles, termites, ants, and moths. For adults, prey is either swallowed directly or first beaten against a branch to break the prey item into manageable pieces.

Green woodhoopoes are primarily carnivorous and insectivorous and their captive diet should reflect this. A variety of insects should be provided such as waxworms, adult crickets and mealworms/superworms of various sizes. Their diet should also include small pieces of bird-of-prey meat (i.e. Nebraska, Toronto, etc.), soaked dog food and/or soft-bill pellets, and can include a very small amount of chopped greens and fruit if desired. A sprinkle of vitamin supplement such as vionate, calcium (especially important during nesting season), or Nekton 1 should also be provided.

<b>Life Expectancy in the Wild:</b>	Males:	8 yrs maximum	Females:	8 yrs maximum
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<b>Life Expectancy in Captivity:</b>	Males:	Mean is 9.7 years	Females:	Mean is 9.4 years
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### BREEDING INFORMATION:

<b>Age at Sexual Maturity:</b>	Males:	Viable at 1 year but not routinely successful until age 2-3 years.	Females:	Viable at 1 year but not routinely successful until age 2-3 years.
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### Courtship Displays:

In any given territory there is generally one monogamous breeding pair, usually the oldest birds. Prior to breeding, the pair leaves the group to forage and allopreen quietly on their own with the male frequently offering food to the female. During this time, the non-breeding members of the flock are scouting for nesting sites while foraging. Nest sites chosen are usually closest to the most concentrated food source in the territory. The unlined nest of choice usually consists of a natural live tree cavity or an old nest hole from a woodpecker or barbet.

### Nest Site Description:

Green Woodhoopoes have successfully bred in both free-flight aviaries and smaller well-planted enclosures (smallest averaging 4' x 10' x 10') when isolated into pairs. When provided a variety of nest boxes and palm logs in larger aviaries, they will generally inspect each one to find one of their liking. Boxes should average about 12-18" deep with a 2-3" diameter hole and can be between 8" and 12" square. There are obviously exceptions with some pairs choosing boxes that weren't originally meant for them. The birds nest in unlined cavities in the wild but they will usually excavate shavings if placed in the box. There should be a bed of nesting material in the box at all times to prevent chicks from splaying.

### Clutch Size, Egg Description:

The average clutch size is 3-5 blue-green eggs about 25x18mm. Pairs can produce two clutches per year in a bountiful season in the wild and routinely clutch multiple times in captive environments.

<b>Incubation Period:</b>	Breeding usually occurs during the rainy season (July through October depending on the geographical area).
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<b>Fledgling Period:</b>	Fledging occurs at 28-30 days. The young are protected and fed by all members of the flock for
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Incubation by the female starts with the complete clutch and lasts for 17-18 days.

several weeks after fledging. A few months later the fledglings will, in turn, contribute food to the next group of hatchlings. They will remain with the parents for 1-5 years as non-breeding helpers.

### Parental Care:

These birds use a cooperative breeding system in which the primary breeding pair will have help feeding their young from typically 1-10 non-breeding birds, including their offspring from previous clutches. The male and helper birds will forage for food and bring it to the female who relays it to the altricial chicks. Just prior to fledging, all of the members of the flock call extensively to the young and preen them. This appears to prepare them for integration into the group.

Breeding pairs can frequently have multiple clutches per season. The adult pair and the eldest clutch of fledged chicks can generally be maintained together, but it is advisable to remove these older chicks when the subsequent clutch is ready to fledge. The breeding pair can be aggressive to and sometimes kill the older chicks. Same-sex pairings of adult green woodhoopoes have been successful in both large and small aviaries.

Although it is typically possible to house the primary breeding pair of green woodhoopoes with previous offspring during breeding season, there are instances of this not being successful. The possibility of the adult birds attacking the juveniles exists, as does the possibility of the juveniles preying on the newly hatched chicks.

### Chick Development:

Woodhoopoe chicks hatch asynchronously, although it is typical for the adults to not begin incubation until the second or third egg of the clutch is laid. This results in the first hatchlings to be similar with the final 2-3 eggs hatching the following days. The chicks develop slowly over the course of the 26-28 day nesting period and typically all fledge within 24 hours of each other. The chicks will routinely return to the nest box for an extended time after they have fledged.

## CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

### Social Structure in the Wild:

Green woodhoopoes are highly sociable, chattering birds usually seen in small flocks of 4-15 individuals typically from a family group. Groups are often seen following each other from tree to tree while foraging in cracks and crevices. During the dry season they also forage on the ground. The sex ratio in flocks is approximately 1:1 but as a rule only includes one breeding pair.

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These birds are highly territorial with each family-based flock usually defending the same large area throughout the year. Territorial defense is through group displays with birds often passing lichens or bark between themselves to increase group cohesion. Sexes generally roost separately. When vacancies in flocks occur through predation, they are often filled by birds of the same sex from nearby territories. Members of flocks tend to be very closely related. Unrelated females break off to form new flocks when they reach sexual maturity.

**Social Structure in Captivity:** Birds can be housed as a pair in a breeding or non-breeding situation, in a large mixed gender flock based on both family and unrelated groupings, or as a single-gender flock.

**Minimum Group Size:** 2

**Maximum Group Size:** Depends on the size of the enclosure, but up to 15 birds or more is reasonable in very large habitats.

**Compatible in Mixed Species Exhibits:** Yes **Comments:** Woodhoopoes have been successfully housed with many dozens of species without complication.

**Optimal Habitat Size:** For a single pairing the enclosure can be as small as 4' wide by 10' deep by 8' in height. However, this is not recommended for breeding birds or groups. For larger flock sizes the available space should increase significantly based on the number of birds comprising the flock.

**Management Challenges:** The biggest challenge presented by woodhoopoes without a doubt is their inquisitive nature in finding every gap and cavity in an enclosure. They are adept at finding the weak point of their habitats and numerous birds have found ways to escape.

Roughly 8-10% of the historical captive population has escaped from zoological institutions (most of these were recovered), showing a need for care in choosing enclosures. Green woodhoopoes explore their environment in great detail due to their nature of being foragers as well as having a healthy supply of curiosity. They often inspect every inch of their enclosure from top to bottom and find weaknesses that exist. Their body design allows them to slip into tight spaces that either allows them escape, or equally as likely, entrapment. Birds that are not seen for several days are sometimes found dead, wedged into spaces that they were unable to escape from.

They have also been known to chip away at old, rotten wood thus making their own escape route. Always inspect aviaries, introduction cages, and any other spaces they are housed in for even the smallest openings.

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Green woodhoopoes are currently listed as least concern and are still fairly common across their native range. They have adapted to human intrusion into their habitat and have been able to make use of human structures for reproduction when natural sites are no longer available. Breeding success and life expectancy are affected by several factors including predation and competition. Driver ants have shown to be nocturnal predators of nestling woodhoopoes in nest holes. Predators to fledglings and adults include Gabar goshawks, Harrier hawks, Pearl-spotted owls, genets and mite infestations. There is often intense competition for proper nesting sites between woodhoopoes and other bird species, mammals, and honeybees. Green woodhoopoe annual numbers are further affected by parasitism by Greater Honeyguides in Nigeria. According to Urban et al., their overall mean annual survival is low.

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